



A map of the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline route. The natural gas pipeline would cut through eight counties.  
N.C. Department of Environmental Quality

## OP-ED

# NC can open a pipeline to new industry

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Forbes recently ranked North Carolina the No. 1 state for business in the country, and for good reason. Look no further than the incredible partnership among dozens of participants – large, small, public and private – that prepared our state to be a finalist for a major auto assembly plant. Economic development work – something we do every day – brings out the best of who we are as North Carolinians. This project is a prime example of what can be accomplished when we come together for the good of the state.

We have now proved that North Carolina can compete on the highest level. Our time will come, but to win, we need to continue sharpening our competitive edge and preparing our state for the next job growth opportunities. The megasites are primed and ready, and we have an excellent framework for collaboration. But to build on this progress, we must ready our infrastructure and strengthen our competitive edge.

While the auto assembly plant would have eventually added 4,000 jobs, we have a unique opportunity in front of us to create more than 4,400 short-term construction jobs right now, paving the way for thousands of permanent jobs down the road. That opportunity is the Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

Building the Atlantic Coast Pipeline will help make North Carolina even more competitive when recruiting industry to our state. The project will enhance the state's infrastructure necessary to power transformative job growth opportunities through more affordable, safe, clean-burning natural gas.

Just last week, the sustained record cold temperatures were a stark reminder of how important this project is for North Carolina families and businesses. The heavy demand to heat residential homes, hospitals and industrial buildings to protect from the freeze caused natural gas prices to soar due to constrained delivery infrastructure. Selling from the only available pipeline in our state, natural gas spiked more than tenfold, averaging about \$34 per thousand cubic feet (Mcf) for the week. At its peak, the price rocketed over \$120/Mcf. Meanwhile, where the Atlantic Coast Pipeline would draw its supply, the fuel was selling for about \$3/Mcf. This is a powerful reminder of how an alternative supply of natural gas from the Atlantic Coast Pipeline will help provide significant savings for residential and business customers.

Over the first two decades of operation, the pipeline is expected to stimulate \$1.2 billion in capital investment in the state, specifically in struggling rural communities in eastern North Carolina. The Atlantic Coast Pipeline will also provide millions of dollars in annual property tax revenues to help revenue-starved counties along its route fund schools, hospitals, emergency responders and other essential community services.

The critical energy infrastructure provided by the Atlantic Coast Pipeline will help meet the state's growing energy needs, giving us the ability to attract new businesses and industries that can create thousands of permanent, good-paying jobs, while delivering more affordable energy for our families and businesses.

Let's turn the page and open up the next chapter of North Carolina's economic story with the Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

*David Fountain is the North Carolina president of Duke Energy.*

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